

## The Persecution of the Church 15

Egypt, wholly composed of Christians, and, even upposing the facts to have been as stated, their refusal to march in obedience to the Emperor's orders and rejoin the main army at a moment when an active campaign was in progress, simply invited the stroke of doom. Maximian was not the man to tolerate mutiny in the face of the enemy.

But still there were many Christian victims of Maximian wherever he took up his quarters — at Rome, Aquileia, Marseilles—mostly soldiers whose refusal to sacrifice brought down upon them the force of the law. Maximian is described in the <sup>1</sup> Passion of St. Victor\* as "a great dragon," but the story, even as told by the hagiologist, scarcely justifies the epithet. Just as the military prefects, before whom Victor was first taken, begged him to reconsider his position, so Maximian, after ordering a priest to bring an altar of Jupiter, turned to Victor and said \* : "Just offer a few grains of incense ; placate Jupiter and be our friend." Victor's answer was to dash the altar to the ground from the hands of the priest and place his foot triumphantly upon it. We may admire the fortitude of the martyr, but the martyrdom was self-inflicted, and the anger of the Emperor not wholly unwarranted. "Be our friend," he had said, and his overtures were spurned with contempt.

We may suspect, indeed, that this partial persecution was due rather to the insistence of the martyrs themselves than to deliberate policy on the part of Maximian. When enthusiastic Christians thrust

\* Pone Ihura: placam Jovem et noster amicus esto.